

COOCH'S BRIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT PRESERVATION CONCERNS DeIDOT Public Meeting – March 25, 2024

The Cooch's Bridge Historic Site is poised to become a premier heritage site in Delaware and the region. The site will see an increase in heritage tourism with the coming of the 250th commemoration of the founding of the United States in 2026.

The DeIDOT project area is squarely in the Cooch's Bridge National Register Historic District, created in 1973 (amended 1999). The area is historically significant for several reasons. The complex of historic structures and sites at and around Cooch's Bridge includes the houses, mills, mill races, dams, bridges, and sites associated with more than 250 years of milling, farming, and industrial development. Cultural resources here also include archaeological evidence of thousands of years of Native American history. Finally, the site is significant as the location of the largest land battle fought in Delaware during the American Revolution (September 3, 1777). American soldiers gave their lives here and were buried in unmarked graves.

Ongoing planning for the site includes visioning for the property and planning for a new visitors' center. Other initiatives include a feasibility study for a pedestrian/bicycle trail linking Iron Hill Park with Glasgow Regional Park, a study jointly funded by state and county funds.

Planning in this area must recognize that there will be an increase in pedestrian traffic, and thus safety concerns of non-vehicular movement is foremost. The State has already invested millions of dollars in the preservation of this area, through purchase of the Cooch-Dayett Mill property and the Cooch Homestead property.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies, such as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out, assist, fund, permit, license, or approve throughout the country. If such a project has the potential to affect historic properties, like the Cooch's Bridge National Register Historic District, a Section 106 review must take place. Section 106 gives the public the chance to weigh in on these matters before a final decision is made. This process is an important tool for citizens to lend their voice in protecting and maintaining historic properties in their communities.

The Cooch's Bridge Historic District Consulting Parties offer the following:

- **This DeIDOT workshop provides the public with an opportunity to learn about the project and offer feedback. Please know that members of the public can reject any or all of the proposed DeIDOT alternatives and offer your own.**
- **OVERARCHING GOVERNING PRINCIPLE** - Any and all projects that affect in any way the Cooch's Bridge Historic District must, first and foremost, minimize to the greatest extent possible, ground disturbance, structure/bridge demolition and/or removal, and landscape degradation. This historic property is a fragile and

unique space in Delaware and MUST be protected and preserved to the greatest extent possible.

- All alternatives MUST be governed by the above statement. Damage to this area, in any form, must be minimized and avoided.
- In addition to historic preservation all alternatives MUST consider safety and esthetics before traffic congestion and mobility. Pedestrian and bicycle safety within a park area is more important than moving traffic faster and degrading the historical setting of the National Register District. All alternatives MUST plan for the use of this space as a public park with pedestrians and bicycles and recreational traffic. Planning simply for vehicular traffic is short-sighted.
- Planning for the Cooch’s Bridge intersection MUST include the results of trail, site interpretation, and visitors’ center feasibility planning, all of which are ongoing initiatives. The results of these studies must be incorporated into any design solution.
- Planning for Cooch’s Bridge must not be driven by economic growth engines only or by traffic concerns only. Shipment centers, data centers, etc., are not the crucial element on the landscape here; this space is unique in Delaware history and is a sensitive historical and cultural gem.
- While the Consulting Parties support the use of traffic circles as a design concept, it must be emphasized that THIS LOCATION IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR A TRAFFIC CIRCLE. Placement of a traffic circle, relocation of existing carriage ways or roads, and extensive (and irreversible) land damage to National Register lands, park lands, and dedicated open space is not an acceptable solution for the Cooch’s Bridge area.

DelDOT has dedicated and talented professional engineers who have an opportunity to develop a creative solution that minimizes traffic, enhances safety and esthetics, and preserves this important Delaware location for future generations. We look forward to continuing discussions about this significant area of our state, and to successfully blending heritage planning, safety planning, traffic planning, economic growth planning, and most importantly, planning for future generations of Delawareans to understand the uniqueness of their state.

Thank you for your interest in the Cooch’s Bridge Historic Site.

Listing of Consulting Parties	
Cannonshire Maintenance Association	New Castle County
Cooch family	Pencader Heritage Area Association
Daughters of the American Revolution	Preservation Delaware
Delaware Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs	Sons of the American Revolution
Friends of Cooch’s Bridge Historic Site	

Opportunities to Learn More about the Cooch’s Bridge Historic Site:

<https://friendsofcoochsbridge.org/>